7: Catlin R, E-5 (1832-1840) 1857
NQ17 Mandan NQ17

261 As I before observed, these men generally eat but twice a day, and many times not more than once, and those meals are light and simple compared with the meals that are swallowed in the civilized world; and by the very people also, who sit at the festive board three times a day, making a jest of the Indian for his eating, when they actually guzzle more liquids, besides their eating, than would fill the stomach of an Indian.

There are, however, many seasons and occasions in the year with all Indians, when they fast for several days in succession; and others where they can *get* nothing to eat; and at such times (their habits are such) they may be seen to commence with an enormous meal, and because they do so, it is an insufficient reason why we should for ever remain under so egregious an error with regard to a single custom of these people.

I have seen so many of these, and lived with them, and travelled with them, and oftentimes felt as if I should starve to death on an equal allowance, that I am fully convinced I am correct in saying that the North American Indians, taking them in the aggregate, even where they have an abundance to subsist on, eat less than any civilized population of equal numbers, that I have ever travelled amongst.

251 171 Their mode of curing and preserving the buffalo meat is somewhat curious, and in fact it is almost incredible also; for it is all cured or dried in the sun, without the aid of salt or smoke! The method of doing this is the same amongst all the tribes, from this to the Mexican Provinces, and is as follows:—The choicest parts of the flesh from the buffalo are cut out by the squaws, and carried home on their backs or on horses, and there cut "*across the grain*," in such a manner as will take alternately the layers of lean and fat; and having prepared it all in this way, in strips about half an inch in thickness, it is hung up by hundreds and thousands of pounds on poles resting on crotches, out of the reach of dogs or wolves, and exposed to the rays of the sun for several days, when it becomes so effectually dried, that it can be carried to any part of the world without damage. This seems almost an unaccountable thing, and the more so, as it is done in the hottest months of the year, and also in all the different latitudes of an Indian country.

So singular a fact as this can only be accounted for, I consider, on the ground of the extraordinary rarity and purity of the air which we meet with in these vast tracts of country, which are now properly denominated "the great buffalo plains," a series of exceedingly elevated plateaus of *steppes* or *prairies*, lying at and near the base of the Rocky Mountains.

263 It is a fact then, which I presume will be new to most of the world, that meat can be cured in the sun without the aid of smoke or salt; and it is a fact equally true and equally surprising also, that none of these tribes use salt in any way, although their country abounds in salt springs; and in many places, in the frequent walks of the Indian, the prairie may be seen, for miles together, covered with an incrustation of salt as white as the drifted snow.

7: Catlin R, E-5 (1832-1840) 1857
NQ17 Mandan NQ17

I have, in travelling with Indians, encamped by such places, where they have cooked and eaten their meat, when I have been unable to prevail on them to use salt in any quantity whatever. The Indians cook their meat more than the civilized people do, and I have long since learned, from necessity, that meat thus cooked can easily be eaten and relished too, without salt or other condiment. 252 263

The fact above asserted applies exclusively to those tribes of Indians which I have found in their primitive state, living entirely on meat; but everywhere along our Frontier, where the game of the country has long since been chiefly destroyed, and these people have become semi-civilized, raising and eating, as we do, a variety of vegetable food, they use (and no doubt require), a great deal of salt; and in many instances use it even to destructive excess.